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ROTEBURY RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

Annual Report of Dr. R. Armstrong, Medical Officer
of Health (Temporary - Part Time) for the year 1954

Sirs,

I submit my Annual Report for the Year Ending 31st December, 1954. The population of the Rural District is 5,580.

During this year there have been 79 births and 70 deaths. There were 42 boys and 27 girls born to parents from the Rural District. In addition there was one still birth and 135 live births in the Coquetdale Cottage Hospital to mothers who live outside the Rural Area. There were two illegitimate births from the Rural Area and three from outside it. A birth rate per thousand of 14.1.

The Annual total of births in the Coquetdale Cottage Hospital has now reached the two hundred mark. It is, I believe, the intention of the Regional Hospital Board to accommodate not less than 216 mothers in this hospital during the course of a year. It will be appreciated that this involves a considerable amount of skilled work and it is in addition to the ten beds, more or less constantly occupied by the Medically sick or Convalescent patients. This Hospital is, therefore not only a valuable asset to the Rural District but it is an essential link in the chain of Hospitals established throughout the Rural Areas of the Region.

The total number of deaths was 70, giving a rate per thousand of 12.5. To analyse the causes of death:- As usual Heart Disease in one form or another i.e. Coronary Thrombosis, Ventricular Failure, Myocardial Degeneration has been responsible for the largest number of deaths. A total of 22. Next to this cause comes Disease of the Cerebral Arteries with 9 deaths and Cancer which also was responsible for 9 deaths. Cancer of the lungs - 5 cases; cancer of the bladder and prostate - 2 cases; cancer of the oesophagus - 1 case; and cancer of the colon - 1 case. There were also 2 fatal motor accidents and one fatal accident in Elsdon Pit.

Cancer of the lungs is now much more frequently reported than before. Apart from the increased frequency of its occurrence I am of opinion that accuracy of diagnosis has played a part in making the numbers appear more formidable.

There were 41 Infectious Diseases notified including 9 cases of Pneumonia; 2 cases of Puerperal Pyrexia; 16 cases of Whooping Cough; 6 cases of Scarlet Fever; 5 cases of Measles; three cases of Food Poisoning. In addition there were eleven cases of Tuberculosis reported - 6 in the lungs, 3 in the Cervical Glands and 2 in the bladder.

It will have been noted that a vaccine to protect against Infantile Paralysis has been discovered and prepared in America. Australia is to prepare a similar vaccine. The Medical Research Council of Great Britain which is responsible for the investigation of disease and its treatment in this country is not yet persuaded that the vaccine will be effective here. It is, however, carrying out investigations and will, no doubt, publish its findings as soon as they have been reached. It is no use raising hopes which may not be justified.

I am indebted to Mr. Oliver for the following account of water supplies, sanitation and housing.

WATER SUPPLIES:-

The water supplies at Rothbury, Whittingham, Longframlington, Elsdon, Threpton and Alwinton which are controlled by this Authority have again been satisfactory.

The scheme to supply the Village of Hepple which has been under consideration by the Ministry since the 12th July, 1949 has at last begun and will be completed early in 1955.

The Ministry have given approval to the provision of a storage reservoir at Longframlington. Work has commenced and the scheme will be completed by mid 1955.

No other major extensions have taken place during the year except to construct water mains to serve new housing.

The Council supply approximately 60% of the population.

SEWERAGE AND SEWAGE DISPOSAL:

No changes have taken place during the year.

The schemes submitted to the Minister to provide sewage disposal works at Whittingham and Longframlington have still not been given a starting date. Conditions in the villages are steadily getting worse as more conversions to the water carriage system take place.

HOUSING:

During the year 20 houses were built by the Council and two by private persons. Assistance under the Housing Act 1949 was given to owners to improve 41 houses making a total of 109 since the inception of the Scheme. Much useful work is being done in reconditioning cottages and the scheme is commended to all property owners whose properties lack the amenities so necessary to lead a full and useful life.

(Signed) R. ARMSTRONG